

EXCISE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

RECEIVED BY J.D. STEVART DATE 11/19/85 ~~SECRET~~

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September 19, 1983

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I have been asked to respond to your letter to Ambassador Eagleburger which posed a number of questions relating to travel restrictions currently imposed on diplomats in the United States and the Soviet Union and other matters.

With regard to your first three questions, in 1941 the Soviet Government instituted strict controls on the travel of all foreigners resident in the USSR, including American diplomats resident in Moscow. The US attempted over the next ten years to convince the Soviets that it was not in the interest of either side to maintain these controls. When these attempts proved futile, the US reluctantly and on a reciprocal basis imposed its own travel controls on Soviet diplomats in 1951. In 1955 the system was refined by "closing" a number of areas in the United States to match areas the Soviets had closed to travel by foreigners.

Over the years, the Soviet authorities have decreased the area officially closed to Americans, probably in response to our reciprocal actions. However, they have also refined their procedures for obstructing travel to nominally open areas. We continue to press the Soviets to reduce or abolish travel controls on a mutual basis.

All travel by Soviet diplomats, journalists and resident businessmen outside a free-movement zone (usually 25 miles from the center of the city in which they reside) must be registered in advance. If the notification is submitted the proper time in advance and calls for travel to open areas, travel is normally permitted.

Requests submitted in an untimely fashion, or those calling for travel to closed areas, must specifically ask for an exception. Since about 20 percent of the land area of the USSR is officially closed to travel by foreigners, the US has closed a similar proportion of this country to Soviets resident in the

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United States. Since no US diplomat has been granted permission to travel to a closed area in the Soviet Union in recent years, we do not as a rule permit Soviet diplomats to travel to closed areas in the United States. On frequent occasions, the Soviet authorities will deny American diplomats, journalists or businessmen permission to travel to open areas in the Soviet Union.

With regard to your fourth question, in July 1973 the United States officially opened the Consulate General in Leningrad. At the same time, the Soviet Union opened its Consulate General in San Francisco. These are the only such posts that either nation has established. The same travel restrictions apply to diplomats at these posts as at the respective embassies and at the United Nations. While the total number of Soviet diplomats accredited to the United States is limited to 320, there is no such limit imposed upon the US presence in the Soviet Union.

In answer to your last three questions regarding travel restrictions imposed by other Western governments, Communist governments, and totalitarian and authoritarian governments, I would direct you to the Embassies of the specific countries you have in mind, since they would have the most complete information on this subject.

Sincerely yours,

JF

James F. Schumaker
Bilateral Affairs
Office of Soviet Union Affairs

Drafted: EUR/SOV: RAFEinberg *JF*
9/19/83 Ext. 28671 S/S #8327180
Cleared: EUR/SOV: JFSchumaker *JF*
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